

**NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Debra Kahl – (208) 526-4714, [Debra.Kahl@inl.gov](mailto:Debra.Kahl@inl.gov) (through April 25)  
(208) 520-0736 (cell, April 26-May 1 in Sun Valley)  
(208) 622-2886 (Symposium office in Sun Valley)

## **Teens to vie for \$500,000 in scholarships at Hispanic Youth Symposium**

About 300 Latino high school students from throughout Idaho will compete for college scholarships worth nearly \$500,000 at the 2005 Hispanic Youth Symposium April 30 - May 1 in Sun Valley.

The U.S. Department of Energy, Idaho National Laboratory (INL), Gem State Diversity Initiatives and several state agencies and employers are sponsoring the symposium. The annual event is designed to encourage Latino teens to break the cycle of poverty and seek brighter futures by finishing high school, obtaining higher education and building careers.

Students will spend three days listening to motivational speakers, engaging in problem-solving skill workshops and examining possible career paths for the future. They will compete in speech, talent, athletic and interactive skill contests for awards and scholarships. Also, they will interact with peers and spend time with participants who serve as role models and mentors. Many mentors come from migrant backgrounds or struggled to break barriers.

Theme of the symposium is "Si Se Puede!" – "It Can Be Done!" Gov. Dirk Kempthorne will welcome the students. Motivational speaker and author Pegine Echevarria will challenge the teens to better themselves. Luis Ibarra, the crowd-favorite presenter from Phoenix who returns to address the symposium every year, will combine humor and practical advice to motivate the students.

Fifteen colleges and universities from Idaho and surrounding states will be represented this year, recruiting students, sponsoring college/career booths and awarding an estimated half million dollars in scholarships. About 100 students attended the first symposium and one attendee received a scholarship for \$1,000. Since then, more than 4,000 students have attended, and scholarships valued at about \$2.5 million have been awarded.

Since 1989, INL has hosted the symposium to fight against the chronically high dropout rate of Idaho's Latino teens. The dropout rate – which once reached 60 percent – has decreased, but remains high at about 25 percent.

The symposium is a collaborative effort among public employers, federal management contractors, private industry, state and private educational institutions and Hispanic organizations from throughout Idaho. It has received national recognition by being benchmarked by representatives from Fortune 500 corporations and replicated in youth initiatives in Arizona, California and Washington.

Idaho National Laboratory is a nuclear energy and multiprogram national laboratory dedicated to supporting the U.S. Department of Energy's missions in nuclear programs, national security and science. INL is operated for the DOE by Battelle Energy Alliance, LLC.

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